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TRUTH IN SEED LABELING



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
CONSUMER AND MARKETING SERVICE
GRAN DIVISION

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CURRENT SERIAL RECORDS

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
CONSUMER AND MARKETING SERVICE
GRAN DIVISION • PA-917

IN BRIEF . . .

Because of the Federal Seed Act, seed buying need not be hit or miss. The labels required on all seed moving across State lines give you most of the information you need to start a successful planting. Labels required by the Act show:

Name of kind and variety—So the buyer can choose the variety best suited for his needs.

Seed purity—The percentage of each kind or variety of seed and the amount of weed seeds and other unwanted matter in the seed.

Germination—The percentage of the seeds which are expected to grow into normal plants under ideal conditions.

PROTECTION AGAINST MISLABLED SEED

The Federal Seed Act helps protect the farmer, marketer, and consumer from mislabeled seed.

It was passed by Congress in 1939 to give this truth-in-labeling protection to farmers and other buyers of agricultural and vegetable seeds. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Consumer and Marketing Service administers and enforces the law with help of State seed agencies in each of the 50 States.

All States have seed laws requiring truthful labeling of seed offered for sale. The Federal Seed Act complements these laws by regulating seed moving between the States as well as seed imported into the United States.

To assure correct labeling, seed technologists examine samples of vegetable and agricultural seeds to determine what kinds of seed are in the container, how much of each kind, the number of weed seeds, and the percentage of inert matter (such as dirt and stones). They grow samples to determine the percentage of seeds that are expected to produce normal plants. All this information and more must be on the label.

By requiring truthful labeling and by prohibiting false advertising, the Federal Seed Act enables you to make an intelligent selection based on fact—not fiction.

HOW TO READ THE LABEL

Purity

You don't have to guess at the contents of a seed container. The Act requires detailed labels on all farm and grass seed. Labels must indicate the percentage of each kind of seed present in excess of 5 percent. The percentages of other crop seeds, weed seeds, and inert matter (chaff, dirt, stones) must also be indicated.

Noxious-Weed Seeds

Some weed seeds are particularly harmful in certain areas. Each State has a list of seeds which it considers "noxious," or harmful. The Federal Seed Act requires all farm and grass seed shipped into the State to be labeled to show the name and number per unit of weight of these seeds present. If they are present, they may not exceed the limits set by the State.

Origin

Certain seeds (alfalfa, red clover, white clover, and field corn other than hybrids) which are grown in one area may not grow well in other areas. So the label must show the State or country of origin of these seeds. In this way you can select seed suited to your locality.

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Purity Analysis—Seed analysts separate seed mixture to find out how much of each kind of seed or waste matter it contains.

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Germination

Germination rate tells you what percentage of the seeds is expected to produce normal plants under ideal conditions. A rate of 85 percent, for example, means that 85 out of every 100 pure seeds—given ideal care and growing conditions—will develop adequately.

It's wise to check seed labels to see when the seed was tested for germination. Seed loses its ability to grow or develop as it becomes older—especially in warm, humid areas. Because of this, it must have been tested within 6 months before it leaves the State. In most States, it must have been tested within 9 months before sale.

Hermetically sealed seed may be shipped interstate for a longer period of time after testing—24 months—if it is packaged as required under the Federal Seed Act.

Vegetable Seed

The vegetable seeds you buy—for gardening or truck

farming—require less labeling information than other agricultural and lawn seeds. Only the kind and name of the variety must be shown on containers of 1 pound or less if the seed is above a certain germination standard. (If labels on farm seeds don't list the variety name, they must say "Variety—Not Stated.") Also, vegetable seeds in containers of 1 pound or less with a germination rate below certain standards established by rules under the Federal Seed Act must be plainly marked "Below Standard" and must show the percentage of germination and the date of the germination test. Vegetable seed in containers of more than 1 pound must always show the germination percentage and the date of test.

Imported Seed

USDA and the U.S. Department of the Treasury enforce the foreign commerce provisions of the Federal Seed Act to insure that imported seed is of at least minimum quality. Each lot of seed to be imported into the United

Growth Chamber—One of the ways to determine whether varieties are correctly labeled is to study the mature plant. In this growth chamber, growing conditions are controlled to speed the plant to maturity.

States is sampled at the port of entry by customs inspectors. The sample is sent to one of the four Federal seed laboratories for testing, to make sure it meets the minimum standards of the Act before the seed lot is permitted to enter this country.

VIOLATIONS

To determine whether seed is correctly labeled, State seed inspectors visit seed stores and routinely draw samples for testing by State and Federal seed laboratories.

Seed officials also examine seed catalogues and other seed advertisements to guard against false or misleading statements.

Violators may be prosecuted either in criminal proceedings or in civil suits. The seed may be seized by Federal courts and required to be relabeled, destroyed, or used for other purposes. Warning notices are sent to shippers for minor violations.



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Germination—To determine the germination rate, seeds are rolled up on a paper towel and placed in a germinator where the temperature, humidity, and light are controlled 24 hours a day to provide best growing conditions. In time, the roll is removed from the germinator, and the analyst counts the normal seedlings.

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Seed Label—This is what to look for on the seed you buy. If you select seed adapted to your needs and growing conditions, you will be well on your way to a successful growing season.

	
Farmers Seed Co.	
(Name or code designation)	
Farmersville, Iowa	
Clark 63	(Address) Soybean
(Variety)	(Kind of seed)
Lot No. X-100	
Where grown Illinois	
Pure seed 99.00	%
Inert matter .95	%
Weed seed .01	%
Crop seed .04	%
Germination 90	%
Hard seed none	%
Total germination and hard seed %	
Date of test March 1969	
(Month)	(Year)
Noxious weed seeds None	



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